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State Self-Esteem, Loneliness and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to examine the relationship between state self esteem, loneliness and life-satisfaction in adulthood. Participants were 213 (50 boys and 163 girls) students from shiraz university, who completed the State Self-Esteem Scale (SESS); the short form of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adult (SELSA-S) and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). To examine reliability of measures, Cronbach alpha coefficient, and to determine the validity, factor analysis method were applied. The results of regression showed that appearance self-esteem was stronger positive predictor and emotional loneliness was stronger negative predictor of life satisfaction. Implications and details of findings are discussed.

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1. Introduction

The development of positive psychology has stimulated a growing interest in the studies of what constitutes people's happiness and well-being (Diener, 1984), and an increasing body of research has focused on what contributes to people's satisfaction with their lives (Diener & Diener, 1995). According to Diener (1984), high subjective well-being (SWB) is a reflection of positive thoughts and feelings about one's life, consisting of three components: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and a global sense of satisfaction with life. While positive affect and negative affect tap the emotional aspects of SWB, life satisfaction refers to a cognitive, judgmental process, which is an overall evaluation of one's life rather than a summation across specific domains. In other words, the life satisfaction is one's global evaluation of some aspects of the quality of his/her life such as family, school, friend etc according to his/her criteria (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

Self-Esteem and loneliness are two important indicator factors for life satisfaction. Self-Esteem is the way we generally feel about or evaluate ourselves. Self-esteem has resurfaced as a current topic of interest in several arenas. In the psychological community, the issue over the concept of self-esteem as a stable trait or a fluctuating state is under

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investigation, and in educational and political circles, the emergence of self-esteem as the answer to educational and social reform has fuelled a heated debate (Linton & Marriott, 1996).

Heatherton and Polivy (1991) have developed a scale for measuring state self-esteem, which they define as the short-lived changes in an individual's self-esteem. Self-Esteem is how we feel about or evaluate ourselves at a given point in time. State Self-Esteem is defined as the temporary fluctuations in self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Drawing from a wide body of research (e.g. Rosenberg, 1986; Markus & Kunda, 1986; Savin-Williams & Demo, 1983; Wells, 1988) that supports self-esteem as an enduring yet flexible concept, Heatherton and Polivy saw the need for an instrument designed exclusively for measuring the fluctuating aspects of self-esteem. Thus they developed the State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES). Analyses of the SSES indicated three subscales including performance, social and appearance self-esteem.

Loneliness is another important indicator and vulnerability factor for life satisfaction. Loneliness is a basic fact of life and thus experienced to differing extents by everyone at some stage in their life. Loneliness has been defined as the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relationships is significantly deficient in either quality or quantity (Perlman & Peplau, 1984). In particular, the discrepancy that exists between the interpersonal relationships one wishes to have, and those that one perceives they currently have, makes the individual to experience loneliness (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). Loneliness is also a multidimensional phenomenon, varying in intensity, and across causes and circumstances. According to Weiss's (1973) typology, emotional loneliness is experienced differently to social loneliness.

Numerous studies, in the literature, have proved that lonely people report lower rates of life-satisfaction (e.g., Swami et al., 2007; Neto, 1993; Goodwin, Cook, & Yung, 2001; Kim, 1997; Moore & Schultz, 1983), but little research focuses on the distinction between emotional and social loneliness (e.g. Salimi, 2011).

This research examined the relationship of state self-esteem and social-emotional loneliness with life satisfaction in an adult population. Three hypotheses listed below were examined in this research:

- (1) whether the state self-esteem, loneliness and life satisfaction vary in accordance with gender of students;
- (2) whether there would be a significant relationship between students' state self-esteem, loneliness and life satisfaction;
- (3) which one of the state self-esteem and loneliness dimensions are the stronger predictor of the life satisfaction.

2. Methods

Participants were 213 (50 boys and 163 girls) students that selected through multi-stages cluster random sampling; from Shiraz University, Iran.

2.1. Measures

2.1.1. State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES)

The State Self-Esteem Scale is a 20-item Likert-type scale designed for measuring temporary changes in individual self-esteem. SSES developed and modified by Heatherton and Polivy (1991) from the Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (Janis & Field, 1959). There are three self-esteem factors in the scale: Performance, Social and Appearance. Alpha coefficient for Performance, Social and Appearance self-esteem were .78, .72 and .53, respectively.

2.1.2. Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults- short form (SELSA-S)

The SELSA-S developed by DiTomasso, Brannen and Best (2004) and adapted to Persian by Jowkar and Salimi (2009). The SELSA-S is a 15-item multidimensional measure of loneliness and comprises three subscales: "Romantic", "Family" and "social" loneliness. "Emotional loneliness" comes out of adding of romantic and family loneliness scores. The reliability of the measure examined by internal consistency Chronbach alpha method. Alpha coefficient for romantic, family and social loneliness were .80, .66 and .80, respectively. Validity of the measure investigated by factor analysis method.

2.1.3. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a 5-item scale that measures global life satisfaction. The reliability of the measure examined by internal consistency Chronbach alpha method. Alpha coefficient for life satisfaction was .78. Validity of the measures investigated by factor analysis method.

3. Results

Independent t-test was used in order to whether the scores for state self esteem, loneliness and life satisfaction would vary according to student's gender (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of girls and boys participants in study variables

Variable	male		female		t	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Total self-esteem	62.43	8.40	64.95	9.19	1.10	N.S
Performance self-esteem	26.37	3.84	26.52	4.04	1.68	N.S
Appearance self-esteem	18.13	3.66	19.58	5.52	1.27	N.S
Social self-esteem	18.33	2.98	18.61	3.48	3.66	N.S
Total Loneliness	33.79	9.70	29.66	8.44	1.88	.05
Social Loneliness	20.92	6.13	17.94	5.74	2.12	N.S
Emotional Loneliness	12.62	4.08	11.51	4.25	1.12	.04
Life Satisfaction	15.75	3.85	17.50	3.57	2.08	.04

As shown in Table 1, male loneliness score (M= 33.79, SD= 9.70) is significantly higher than female students (M=29.66, SD=8.44)(t=1.88, p<0.05). Further analysis showed that this distinction is only in the emotional loneliness and males reported significantly greater emotional loneliness (M= 12.62, SD= 4.08) than females(M= 11.51, SD= 4.25)(t= 1.12, p<0.04).

One aim of the study was to investigate the association between state self-esteem loneliness and life satisfaction. For this reason, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed (Table 2). As shown in Table 2, There is a considerable positive correlation between state self-esteem and life satisfaction (r= 0.47, p <0.001). Furthermore the correlation between appearance self-esteem and life satisfaction (r=0.42, p <0.001) is stronger than the correlation between performance self-esteem and life satisfaction (r= 0.27, p <0.001); and the correlation between social self-esteem and life satisfaction (r= 0.23, p <0.001).

On the other hand, there is a considerable negative correlation between loneliness and life satisfaction (r=-0.49, p <0.001). Furthermore the correlation between emotional loneliness and life satisfaction (r=-0.50, p <0.001) is stronger than the correlation between social loneliness and life satisfaction (r= -0.30, p <0.001).

Table 2. Correlation matrix of state self-esteem, loneliness and life satisfaction

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Total Self Esteem	1							
2.Performance Self Esteem	0.72**	1						
3. Social Self Esteem	0.79**	0.30**	1					
4. Appearance Self Esteem	0.66**	0.39**	0.28*	1				
5.Total Loneliness	-0.32*	-0.34**	-0.17	-0.28*	1			
6. Emotional Loneliness	-0.20	-0.27*	-0.11	-0.21-	0.91**	1		
7. Social Loneliness	-0.34**	-0.25*	-0.18	0.26*	0.81**	0.49**	1	
8. Life Satisfaction	0.47**	0.27*	0.23*	0.42**	-0.49**	-0.50**	-0.30**	1

* p<0.05

** p<0.001

Regression analysis was used to determine the more predictive variable of self-esteem and loneliness for life satisfaction (Table 3). The results revealed that appearance self-esteem is the strongest positive predictor and emotional loneliness is the strongest negative predictor of the life satisfaction.

Table 3. Regression analysis results in predicting the life satisfaction

Prediction Variables	R	R ²	β	t	Sig.
Performance Self-Esteem			0.01	0.07	N.S.
Social Self-Esteem			0.14	1.31	N.S.
Appearance Self-Esteem	0.68	0.46	0.40	3.37	.001
Emotional Loneliness			-0.56	4.47	.000
Social Loneliness			- 0.17	1.32	N.S.

4. Discussion

In this study, State self-esteem levels of the students were determined by using SSES. The results of this study revealed that all subscales of state self-esteem included Performance, social and Appearance Self-Esteem positively correlated with life satisfaction.

As self-esteem reflects how one evaluates the self, the extent to which one is satisfied with the self constitutes an important component of satisfaction with one's own life. So lower self-esteem and negative evaluations of self, lead to lower life satisfaction.

Our results confirmed that only appearance self-esteem was an strong positive Significant predictor of life satisfaction. People's evaluations about themselves, influence on how they interpret their satisfying their lives. The weaker link between social self-esteem and life satisfaction indicates that in current society, appearance is more important index for satisfying the life.

Another purpose of the study was relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction that was examined by some researchers who have stressed that there is a significant negative association between life satisfaction and loneliness(e.g., Goodwin et al., 2001; Kim, 1997; Schumaker, Shea & Moore & Schultz, 1983). Additionally a person's thoughts about themselves and others, influence the likelihood of their forming satisfying relationships, because these cognitions impact on how they interact, as well as how they interpret interpersonal situations (Murphy & Kupshik, 1992; cited in Heinrich, & Gullone, 2006). According to the Previous studies lonely individuals have generally negative view of themselves and the world (Perlman & Peplau, 1981).

The results of the present study showed also that emotional loneliness is stronger negative predictor of life satisfaction rather than social loneliness. As would expect Social friendships are almost the source of close friendships; however social friendships are much easier to achieve than close friendships. Hence the absence of close relationships (i.e., emotional loneliness) is more painful than the absence of social friendships(i.e., social loneliness). This finding is homolateral with previous findings by author(Salimi, 2008; Salimi, 2011)

Male students' loneliness (M=33.79) was higher than females(M=29.66). This specific finding of the study is consistent with some previous findings(e.g., Salimi, 2008; Salimi, 2011; Tümkaya et al., 2008; Wiseman et al., 1995; Moore & Schultz, 1983). Further analyses showed that this gender difference is only observed in emotional loneliness. A strong possible explanation is that females talk about feelings males and share their feelings with the friends more openly than males, so they experience the lower level of loneliness. Enochs and Roland (2006; cited in Tümkaya et al., 2008) have emphasized that males keep their feelings under control, and they do not cry in comparison with females.

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